

Episode #824 Matthew 16 Part 4-Keys of the Kingdom

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. Peter had spoken for the disciples their belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. The Lord revealed that Peter was rock, and upon the rock of His twelve He was going to build of Him the *ekklesia* or “church.” Yet just what is this thing called a “church”?

III. I Will Build of Me the *Ekklesia*. Matthew 16:18.

- A. Verse 18 *The Resultant Version*. And I say also unto you, that you are rock, and upon this the rock I will build of Me the *ekklesia*, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.
- B. This is the first occurrence of the word *ekklesia* in the book of Matthew, which makes this one of the most important passages in it. *Kaleo* means “to invite, to bid,” and in about 50 occurrences in the New Testament it means this. Yet it means also “to name, to designate, to position, to set forth” and in about 100 occurrences in the New Testament it means this. *Ek* means “out,” and so *ekklesia* means an “out-positioned” or “out-named” one. It refers to one who has a position out of another. It is a governmental term, and when the Lord uses it, the word has to do with the kingdom of the heavens. What we have in *ekklesia* are the out-positioned ones, those who have a position out of God, and who can mediate between God and men. This is what the Lord was about to build. Yet men insist it means “church.” (Sellers) *Time Magazine* reported on the first meeting of the World Council of Churches, and it reported in 1948 that “The greatest church meeting since the reformation could not even agree upon a definition of the word ‘church.’” Nothing has changed from then to now. The problem is probably found in the fact that the word “church” has no definition. Among men a church is a building set apart for worship, a single congregation, or a denomination. Some say the church is the whole company of the redeemed in the present administration. I know of no definition that Scripture denies as fully, as flatly, and as finely as this. Acts 7:38 demonstrates another company of the redeemed called by the Holy Spirit “the church in the wilderness.” So how can the company of the redeemed at the present time act as if the word “church” was descriptive only of them? There was an *ekklesia* in Ephesus composed of those who worshiped Diana of the Ephesians, which any Bible student could see if the word *ekklesia* had not been translated “assembly” in Acts 19:32, 39, and 41. Three times *ekklesia* is translated as “assembly.” We can understand at once why that group of heathens were called an *ekklesia* if we first learn what an *ekklesia* is. But instead, men hide this embarrassing reality behind a translation. The word “church” is a weasel word that wiggles out of being tied down to a clear meaning. It is a chameleon that changes its color to fit its environment. It is related to no one idea, but willingly accommodates itself to any purpose for which people choose to use it. Men put this word in the Bible, not because it translated or represented the Greek word *ekklesia*, but because they wanted to get their religious organizations called churches in the Bible. Why else would they have hidden the truth of Acts 19 behind translation? Every lover of the truth needs to admit his sins and those of his fathers regarding this word “church.” What truth can we possibly have about “the church which is His body” if we do not even have a

- definition of a church? The word *ekklesia* in the New Testament is used of a translation of the Hebrew word *qahal* in the Old Testament in Hebrews 2:12 quoting Psalm 22:22. This tells us that any Scriptural explanation of the word “church” must include a study of the word *qahal* in the Hebrew. An *ekklesia* in Scripture is applied to a certain class of things, and nothing else is ever called by this term. Once we know what characteristic a thing must have for it to be called by this name and be in this class, we will then have a true definition of *ekklesia*, and we can think that every time we come upon the word “church.” The Lord did not say, “On this rock I will build My church,” and mean all the religious organizations we see on every hand today. He was not speaking about a company of true believers. He was speaking about out-called men who would stand as His out-called ones.
- C. “Gates” refers to the powers. The one who has the power of death is the devil, Hebrews 2:14. The forces of darkness would be arrayed against them to destroy them. James was first to go (Acts 12:1-2), but the others would follow in due course. Yet though death might swallow them, it would not prevail over them, for He would buy the victory for them and they would experience it in resurrection. It will not prevail because Christ has the keys of death and of hades, Revelation 1:18.
 - D. Hell is the Greek *hades*. (Our translators have represented multiple Greek words and ideas by “hell.”) This is its second occurrence, after Matthew 11:23. In Acts 2:27, it is used to translate the Hebrew word *she'ol* in Psalm 16:10, showing us that the two words are equivalent. It is used in both Greek and Hebrew for the state of death, a concept we cannot put into a single word in English. It is especially used of the state of death while resurrection is in view. Men could take these out-called ones and put them to death, but the state of death would not be able to hold these men permanently. Christ will deliver them from it, and they will take up their positions as kingdom rulers again when His manifest kingdom comes to earth at last. He will raise them and put them on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, Matthew 19:28.
 - E. In Luke 23:23, the voices of the crowd and of the chief priests prevailed against Pilate’s better judgment, so he commanded the Lord to be crucified. Yet here we read of a thing that will not prevail.

IV. Keys of the Kingdom. Matthew 16:19-20.

- A. Verse 19. “You” is “thee,” the singular, not the plural. Peter becomes the spokesman for the disciples in the Acts period, and the special carrier of the keys. Protestants have shied away from this, since it sets up him being called the “first pope.” But Peter was married (I Corinthians 9:5), and by no means was the first pope.
- B. There are five “keys” in Scripture in six passages. The keys of the kingdom of the heavens here, of knowledge in Luke 11:52, the keys of hades and of death in Revelation 1:18, the key of David in Revelation 3:7 (Isaiah 22:22), and the key of the abyss in Revelation 9:1 and 20:1. They indicate access and authority, power to open.
- C. In John 20:23, the Lord gave these men (plural) the authority to remit (forgive) or retain sins on men. These could be no greater example of binding and loosing than this. Peter bound the sins of Ananias and Sapphira on them in Acts 5:1-11, and they died immediately. In Acts 9:36-43, Peter loosed the woman Tabitha from death. No greater example of loosing could be given. They would be bound in the heavens or loosed in the heavens; in other words, with God. God would agree with his judgment.

D. Verse 20. He gave them orders with great severity. He was getting close to His death, and the real witness was to be given after He rose from the dead. Of course, it was “the Christ” that was the issue, for all men were aware that His name was Jesus.

V. Conclusion: The Lord was going to build His ekklesia (church?) on the rock of the twelve disciples, but He did not mean the religious organizations called “churches” today, but a company of out-positioned individuals. The gates of Hades, the state of death, would not prevail against them, though they all did die. He was going to give Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and we see him using those keys in the Acts period. All the disciples had the power to bind and loose at that time. Do we realize and believe in the great power and authority of these God-commissioned men called the twelve?

Matthew 16: ¹³ When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”

¹⁴ So they said, “Some *say* John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not ^[g]prevail against it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth ^[h]will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

²⁰ Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

²² Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ^[i]“Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”

²³ But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are ^[j]an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. ²⁸ Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

Acts 7: ³⁸ “This is he who was in the ^[a]congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers, the one who received the living oracles^[b] to give to us,

Ephesians 19: ²⁸ Now when they heard *this*, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” ²⁹ So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions. ³⁰ And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. ³¹ Then some of the ^[g]officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. ³² **Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.** ³³ And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. ³⁴ But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!”

³⁵ And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: “Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess ^[h]Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from ^[i]Zeus? ³⁶ Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. ³⁷ For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of ^[j]your goddess. ³⁸ Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a ^[k]case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹ **But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly.** ⁴⁰ For we are in danger of being ^[l]called in question for today’s uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering.” ⁴¹ **And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.**

Hebrews 2: ¹² saying:

“I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”

Psalms 22: ²² I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

Hebrews 2: ¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

Acts 12:1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his* hand to harass some from the church. ² Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

Revelation 1: ¹⁸ I *am* He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of ^[a]Hades and of Death.

Matthew 11: ²³ And you, Capernaum, who^[a] are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Acts 2: ²⁷ For You will not leave my soul in Hades,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

Psalms 16: ¹⁰ For You will not leave my soul in ^[a]Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to ^[b]see corruption.

Matthew 19: ²⁸ So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

I Corinthians 9: ⁵ Do we have no right to take along ^[a]a believing wife, as *do* also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?

John 20: ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained.”